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MYANMAR MILITARY COUP ON 2021: MASTERING THE HEART OF MYANMAR'S DIRTY ECONOMY

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Abstract

The world, which will soon enter the year 2024, continues to be faced with various kinds of conflicts, one of which is a military coup. In the 21st century, military coups are not taboo in countries experiencing economic and political instability and one of the countries that experienced a military coup was Myanmar. Myanmar's military overthrew the existing democratic government in a coup to gain power. Opium was the key behind Myanmar's military coup that took place in 2021. This article is written using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. News articles in mass media, both print and online, were also used as sources. Dissatisfaction in the position of the military has influenced the existing military so that immoral actions are carried out. Many consider that the coup by the Myanmar military was a normalised coup due to political turmoil and differences in goals between the military and the civilian government. But behind these factors is a bigger plan to gain profit. The public needs to see the real reasons behind the coup carried out by the Myanmar military in 2021 so that they can clearly and structurally understand the coup carried out by the Myanmar military which subsequently put Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest and Myanmar is now under the leadership of the Military Junta.

Keywords: Opium, Government, Military, Power, Coup

Abstrak

Dunia yang sebentar lagi akan memasuki tahun 2024, terus dihadapi oleh berbagai macam konflik yang salah satunya adalah kudeta militer. Pada abad ke-21 ini, kudeta militer bukanlah hal tabu yang terjadi pada negara-negara yang mengalami ketidakstabilan baik dalam ekonomi maupun politik dan salah satu negara yang mengalami kudeta militer adalah Myanmar. Militer Myanmar menggulingkan pemerintahan demokratis yang ada dalam sebuah kudeta untuk mendapatkan kekuasaan. Opium merupakan kunci di balik kudeta militer Myanmar yang terjadi pada tahun 2021. Artikel ini ditulis dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Berita-berita di media massa, baik cetak maupun online, juga menjadi sumber. Ketidakpuasan dalam posisi militer telah mempengaruhi militer yang ada sehingga tindakan tanpa moral dilakukan. Banyak pihak yang menganggap bahwa kudeta yang dilakukan oleh militer Myanmar merupakan kudeta biasa yang dinormalisasi karena adanya gejolak politik dan perbedaan tujuan antara militer dan pemerintah sipil. Namun dibalik faktor tersebut terdapat rencana yang lebih besar untuk mendapatkan keuntungan. Publik perlu melihat alasan sebenarnya dibalik kudeta yang dilakukan oleh militer Myanmar pada tahun 2021 sehingga dapat memahami secara jelas dan terstruktur kudeta yang dilakukan militer Myanmar yang selanjutnya membuat Aung San Suu Kyi menjadi tahanan rumah dan Myanmar hingga sekarang berada dibawah kepemimpinan Junta Militer.

Kata kunci: Opium, Pemerintah, Militer, Kekuasaan, Kudeta

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The country located in Southeast Asia and also known as Burma has experienced a military coup in early 2021. Myanmar's military leader, Min Aung Hlaing succeeded in carrying out a coup d'etat and drowned the hopes of a country with a population of 55 million for democracy in their homeland (Regan 2022). Aung San Suu Kyi, who served as State Counselor of Myanmar, had to give up her position and be under house arrest after the military took over the government. The democratically elected figure had to back down against freedom of speech in public and received punishment for 14 crimes that were reasoned against Covid public safety rules, stemming from corruption for not complying with the rules, violating official acts and many more (Mao 2022). The peaceful state that Myanmar initially felt had to turn into a violent phase. The Myanmar military, also known as the Tatmadaw, will face many challenges, ranging from armed organizations that they fought before the coup to ordinary people who are very pro-democracy. The Tatmadaw is very famous for its sadistic use of the military against civilians and cleaning up areas inhabited by the Rohingya Muslim community (Nyein 2021). The opposition will also fare badly and brutal measures will be taken against the demonstrators and it is ensured that violence will escalate with time. The coup that occurred in 2021 has brought economic turmoil coupled with the Covid-19 Pandemic that has occurred since 2020. The economic downturn is inevitable and the efforts to eradicate poverty that have been made over the past few years have vanished. With the economy plunging by 20 percent in 2021 and the collapse of Myanmar's health care system resulting in soaring hunger levels and large numbers of people fleeing to the border and crossing it (Howard et al. 2022).

The sentence handed down to Aung San Suu Kyi and the acts of suppression carried out against other democratically elected government officials are the greatest affront to democracy and justice in Myanmar. With the development of democracy which was quite significant during Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership and the increasing level of public satisfaction and the level of stability of the country which is on the verge of being stable, it is a big question, why did Burma's condition, which initially could be said to be prosperous, have to return to its starting point full of oppression and violence (Blinken 2021). The coup that took place in 2021 was designed and planned in such a way and was well executed by the military. The strategically positioned military knows all the key politicians and declared a constitutional emergency as well as unilateral claims of fraud in the 2020 elections. It is undeniable that what the Myanmar military is doing is a coup and for the younger generation, the coup breeds anger, fear, and frustration. In contrast to the older generation who have felt the events of 1998. The image of the Myanmar military has deteriorated and a sense of trust has been lost in society (Crouch 2021).

In 1996, the Myanmar military attacked and hit the largest rebel group and major drug actor, Khun Sa. Shan State was the center and main producer of opium, which the Myanmar military repelled. The government at the time did not have a significant presence in the rebel-controlled Shan region where drug production was taking place, so the peace process took precedence. A ceasefire was signed

between the Myanmar military and the rebel groups, but the ceasefire had high precision because the ceasefire did not include strong disarmament provisions and the rebel groups were still allowed to carry out activities in the economic sector by growing opium. In return, the rebel groups recognised the sovereignty of the state and allowed a very minimal state presence in the Shan region (Fuller 2007). After the ceasefire was implemented and the security situation in the Shan region began to improve, the government began to negotiate a ceasefire agreement and the negotiations carried out by the government tightened the anti-narcotics provisions. The results of the government's renegotiation resulted in a number of positive outcomes where in Shan State specifically Special Region 4 became opium-free since 1997, then Special Region 1 which is predominantly Kokang-Chinese became opium-free since 2003, and Special Region 2 which is predominantly Wa became opium-free since late 2005. In these vital areas, after illegal cultivation was reduced voluntarily, the Myanmar government began to increase its eradication efforts. The success of the Myanmar government was achieved in 2008 when the Myanmar government succeeded in eradicating opium as much as Afghanistan even though the opium cultivation area was smaller than Afghanistan (Stepanova 2009).

However, the ceasefire was fragile and could lead to conflict in the future. Opium and conflict are two things that cannot be separated from Myanmar. The peace efforts that have been made are always deepened and complicated by opium. Myanmar has long been known as a country famous for its opium production and is second only to Afghanistan. 2 Billion USD is the economic figure of Myanmar opium while the regional trade of Myanmar opium production can be worth 10 Billion USD (Hara 2015). In 2014, a massive effort was made by the Myanmar government to eradicate Myanmar's production and poppy fields were the main target. 21,526 hectares of poppy fields were destroyed by law enforcement officers along with villagers armed with sticks and weed whackers. Myanmar's Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) said that this prevented 30 tonnes of heroin, which is historically satisfactory. However, the number of Poppy plants planted was much higher after the eradication. Money is everything in this case. Opium production and trade is a huge investment field because it has a very high international demand. Billions of dollars is the right figure for the economy of Opium production in Myanmar. You can imagine the billions of dollars that initially benefited the military but Myanmar's civilian government decided to eradicate opium and eradicate opium for good. So this became a war drum for the Myanmar military to be able to move quickly against the Myanmar Civilian government.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

1.2.1. The Concept of Power

Whether a coup is carried out by the military or by an organization or society, there is only one key word in terms of coups and that is power. According to Robert Dahl, power is the influence on the actions of others and he explains with an illustration how A has power over B as long as he can make B do something that A would not do (Dahl 1957, 202-3). If a boss is able to threaten an employee with a warning letter and a pay cut if the employee does not do overtime then what the boss has is power. Power is something that every group will always aim for and in this case the

Myanmar military is aiming for it. By holding the reins of power, the Myanmar military has control over everything and in all sectors.

In 1996, the military signed a ceasefire with the rebel groups that controlled the Shan region. However, the ceasefire was odd because the rebel groups continued to allow opium production. However, when the government negotiated and reinforced the terms of the ceasefire on the abolition of narcotics, problems arose. The civilian government holds the key principles and policies on drug eradication and it is this power that the military seeks. The military has known from the beginning and has always known that opium has considerable potential to improve the economy of both the state and the military and this is what they are trying to fight for but all must be limited because the Civilian Government still has the power and a coup must occur in order to change the reins of power.

2. Literature Review

The article "The World's Response to the Myanmar Military Coup", by Padika Garmabar use a descriptive analysis methodology and library research to describe the world's response to the military coup that occurred in Myanmar. This article conveys that the military coup that occurred in Myanmar received a majority negative response from the United Nations to superpowers such as the United States. The article also highlights ASEAN's weakness in dealing with problems that occur in member countries, resulting in a lack of functioning international law in explaining the coup issue. The coup carried out by the Myanmar military is necessary to respond to the fraud that occurred in the 2020 elections from a military perspective. The world's various responses agreed to strongly condemn the military actions of the Burmese state (Garmabar, 2022). What is different from the author's writing is that the author will not explain in detail about the world's response to the Myanmar military coup. But the author will explain the real reasons behind the ambition of the Myanmar military in carrying out a military coup.

The article "Myanmar Military Coup in International Legal Perspective" by Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal and Indah Dwiprigitaningtias uses normative juridical research methods to describe the military coup that occurred in Myanmar from an international law perspective. This article conveys that in the development of international law, intervention in the internal affairs of a country is increasingly important, but international law does not clearly regulate the actions of military coups that took place in various countries, for example the coup in Myanmar. The UN or ASEAN Charter only regulates the principle of equality where all countries are in the same and equal position, therefore no country may have the right to unilaterally determine whether or not democratic life takes place in a country, and no country may judge whether the political system is other countries are good or not (Iqbal and Dwiprigitaningtias, 2021). What is different from the author's writing is that the author will not explain the military coup that occurred in Myanmar from the perspective of international law. But the author will explain the Myanmar military coup using the communication theory by Harold Laswell.

The article "The Influence of The Myanmar Military Coup On The Stability of The ASEAN Region In 2021" by Fadhlun Nur Hakiem, Annisa Febrianti, Putri Indrasari, & Tania Amelinda Hasanah uses a descriptive qualitative methodology to describe the influence of the Myanmar military coup on the stability of the ASEAN region in 2021. This article said that in this case, the Myanmar military coup needed to

be made into a deep concern, especially regarding the implications of the political coup and the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar on the situation of implementing human rights principles in the regional political sphere. This kind of thing can also lead to the strengthening of authoritarianism practices in the Southeast Asia Region (Hakiem, Indrasari, and Hasanah, 2022). What is different from the author's writing is that the author will not explain the influence of the Myanmar military coup on the stability of the ASEAN region in 2021, but the author will explain the influence of military ambition in carrying out a military coup.

The article "Myanmar's Coup d'état and the Struggle for Federal Democracy and Inclusive Government", by Anna S. King uses the library research methodology to describe the coup that occurred in Myanmar and the struggle for federal democracy and the realization of inclusive government. This article conveys that the success of the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar cannot be judged only in terms of success. Provisional National Unity Government, National Unity Consultative, Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw have made good progress in advancing the process of nation-building and reconciliation with the recognition that sustainable peace can occur when peace overcomes existing injustices and policies of exclusion that create murky situations and lead pathways the state has become much more constructive and inclusive and nowhere near essentialist ideas (King, 2022). What is different from the author's writing is that the author will not explain the success of the pro democracy movement in Myanmar but the author will explain the success of the military coup movement in Myanmar.

The article "The Myanmar Coup And The Role of ASEAN", by Harsh Mahaseth and Aryan Tulysan uses a library research methodology and a qualitative methodology to explain ASEAN's role in responding to the coup that occurred in Myanmar in 2021. This article conveys that ASEAN must create a situation that happened in Myanmar as a matter of urgency and to ensure that an incident similar to the chaotic political crisis does not occur in neighboring countries. ASEAN must be an actor who can play an active role in ensuring order returns to Myanmar, and cannot sit idly by as happened during the 2014 Thai coup. The article also conveys that ASEAN can form a commission to investigate allegations of voter fraud, a commission composed of members elected by mutual consensus of the two parties to the dispute. The military coup is a clear indicator that ASEAN is unable to adhere to and uphold the policy of non-intervention by avoiding punitive action against member states, and at the same time avoid damaging its reputation at the international level (Mahaseth and Tulysan, 2022). What is different from the author's writing is that the author will not detail the role and attitude of ASEAN in the Myanmar military coup in 2021, but the author will detail the reasons for the Myanmar military to carry out a military coup in 2021.

There are 5 articles that the author chose to be the literature review in the author's article because the five articles broadly explain the coup carried out by the Myanmar military in 2021 and most of the articles relate the Myanmar military coup to aspects of democracy and ASEAN. What the author wants to explore more deeply from the coup that took place in 2021 is the cause of the coup and the main factors that made the coup justified and carried out by the Myanmar military. The author is interested that behind thick smoke there must be a fire that is ignited and the author is interested in digging further into the fire that is ignited and a big fire always starts from a small fire.

3. Research Methods

The research conducted by the author uses quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explain in detail the reasons behind Myanmar's military coup. The quantitative methodology used in this article is Content analysis and Secondary analysis. Content analysis is a technique of collecting and analyzing the content of a text or document. Secondary analysis is needed because this article uses information that has been collected by a number of organizations, in this case the World Bank and the United Nations, which have collected data on the production and circulation of opium and the estimated profits obtained from the production and circulation of opium in Myanmar. The qualitative methodology used in this article is Historical Comparative Research. Historical Comparative Research is used by collecting data through bibliographic work and organizing primary and secondary data such as letters, photographs, films from living people as well as writing in books and articles by historians. Articles and news are the main sources in this research, especially news about the military government period which continued during the civilian government period and then the military coup that occurred in Myanmar in 2021. News about opium production in Myanmar was also used in this article. Literature studies are also used to collect data. Data analysis will be done qualitatively by focusing on the views of the actors and then presented. The data used in this article is mostly secondary data where the author takes data from the official websites of international institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations and various organs that support them.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Opium Cultivation

Picture. 1 Myanmar Cultivation Density



Source: (UNODC, 2020)

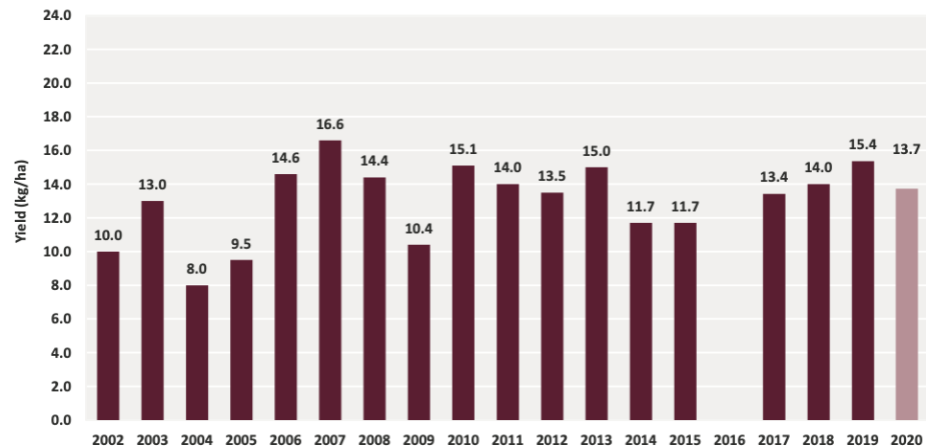
Opium poppy is a plant that can grow and produce good results in a temperate and warm climate coupled with low humidity. Humidity is an important factor in the growth process because excessive humidity or arid conditions will greatly interfere with the growth of poppy plants. This plant will also die if it is exposed to heavy rain on soil conditions that are not dry because the impact of heavy rain can make the colloids from these plants dissolve so that it can reduce the existing quality. In contrast to sandy soil which is not able to maintain water and nutrients for plants so that these plants will experience proper growth. The highlands, especially the plains in Southeast Asia, are a paradise for opium poppies due to the existing geographical conditions (PBS 1998).

Opium, whether raw or ripe, contains more than 35 different alkaloids and in this context includes morphine which accounts for approximately 10 percent of the total weight of opium. In order to get heroin, the first step taken by heroin producers is to extract morphine from opium. Chemicals as well as an adequate supply of water are required for the simple process known as extraction. The extraction of morphine, however, is not done in open spaces but is often done in small laboratories which are sometimes set up close to the poppy fields. The process of extracting morphine from opium will go through the stage of dissolving the opium in hot water which will then be added to lime with the aim of precipitating the non-morphine alkaloids then adding ammonium chloride to precipitate the morphine from the solution.

Opium is a commodity that is banned in several countries in the world because of the effects and impacts it has. However, with proper processing, it can become one of the illegal production sectors and profits that cannot be doubted. Opium is a non-synthetic narcotic which is classified as highly addictive with the poppy plant as its main source. Opium Poppy is the main ingredient and source of many narcotics including codeine, heroin and morphine (DEA 2020). More than 500,000 deaths that occur in the world are caused by opium. According to the world health organization, WHO estimates that more than 115,000 individuals who died in 2017 were caused by opium and in 2018, the number of people who died from an overdose of opium increased by 120% (WHO 2021).

Opium Poppy is a plant that is classified as a forbidden plant, but in Myanmar, this plant is widely grown in a number of areas. Opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar is not carried out in any area, for example in densely populated central cities, but opium poppy cultivation is concentrated in areas based on the figure above which have special topographical conditions. According to the map, opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar occurs in areas of high density specifically in the Mountain Southwest (Southern Shan) region and most of it, Eastern Shan State is the area for cultivation. Near the border of the Eastern and Southern Shan, in the area north of Kyaing Tong city there are also a number of large opium fields, but the opium-growing areas are spread out with relatively less density than the Southern Shan region. Likewise, the eastern part of the Northern Shan region with the Wa region as the border with Tanai which is the eastern border of Myitkyina City in Kachin state is also an area with a fairly high concentration of opium (The Guardian 2023).

Picture. 2 Myanmar's Ability To Produce Opium 1996-2020



Source: (UNODC, 2020)

Referring to the data released by UNODC in 2020, it can be seen together that opium production capabilities in Myanmar experienced maximum results in 2007 and in 2020 when the world is already experiencing a crisis and will be prepared to face a pandemic, the level of opium production in Myanmar remains at a stable rate. Opium production in Myanmar is not something that can be underestimated because behind this dirty and disgusting business there are tempting profits behind it. 131 USD and 144 USD are estimated prices for Opium at the farm level when the opium has been harvested both fresh and dry. Prices are higher in 2019 with an estimate for fresh Opium priced at 145 USD while for dry Opium priced at 160 USD per kilogram (VOA 2023).

4.2 Repulsive Results Into Tempting Gains

Table. 1 Myanmar's Estimated quantities of the different opiate market components

Opium Production 2020	Domestic Demand for Unprocessed Opium	Domestic Demand for Heroin	Unprocessed Opium for consumption potentially available forexport	Heroin potentially available for export
405 (289 to 685)	22 tons	5.8 tons	55 tons	13 - 53 tons

Source: (World Bank, 2020)

Table. 2 Myanmar's Estimated Values of the Opiates Economy

	Gross value Millions of US\$	Value in relation to GDP (%)
Value of the opiates economy (gross)	502 - 1,579	0.7-2.1

Value of the opiates potentially available for export Raw opium Heroin	341 - 1,247 42 299 - 1,205	0.4 - 1.6
Value of the opiates market for domestic consumption Raw opium Heroin	161 - 332 17 144 - 315	0.2 - 0.4
Farm-gate value of opium	58 - 98	0.1
Value of the opiate economy after farm-gate to the border	444 - 1,481	0.6 - 1.9

Source: (World Bank, 2020)

Opium harvested in Myanmar is not only a plant that is visible to the eye, such as the edelweiss plant, but hundreds of tons of opium harvested will be traded. The consumer market of Myanmar Opium is inside and outside Myanmar with further processing of Opium to produce Heroin but opium can also be consumed in its raw condition. Long before the Myanmar merchants carried out the opium trade, the United Kingdom had done this specifically in China. This sales process began with opium production in India which was then sold by the British in China. Then the profits obtained were used to shop for luxury goods at that time such as tea, silk and porcelain which were in demand in the Western European region (Britannica 2021).

An important benchmark in a farmer's gross income is the value of the opium produced by the cultivation of the opium poppy. 58 million USD and 98 million USD are the figures obtained in 2020 with 42 million USD as the midpoint. 289 and 685 tons is the amount of potential opium production with a midpoint at 405 tons. However, with the confiscation of opium by law enforcement agencies in Myanmar, it is predicted that around 77 tons of raw opium or around 19 to 60 tons of heroin can enter the black market. Of the 77 tons of opium produced, it will be distributed in a divided manner, namely 22 tons of opium will be consumed on the domestic or domestic market and can be worth 17 million USD. While the remaining 55 tons of opium will be aimed at the international market by way of export which can be worth 42 million USD. In 2020, showing surprising results because the consumption of opium which has been processed into heroin of 6 tons, can realize profits in the range of 144 - 315 million USD. Even so, the export of opium which has been processed into heroin of 13-53 tons can generate profits of USD 299 million to USD 1.21 billion for street vendors in Myanmar. Crazy profits are guaranteed to be made in opium production in Myanmar, for the gross value of the entire economy of opium production in Myanmar specifically in 2020 can be worth around 502 million USD - 1.58 billion USD and this value is comparable to GDP in 2019 is around 0.7 - 2.1%. The organization value of production and marketing after the plantation to the Myanmar border can be worth around 444

million USD and 1.48 billion USD or around 0.6 - 1.9% of GDP. This figure shows the net profit earned by traders in Myanmar after deducting the purchase price of raw opium from Myanmar farmers (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021).

4.3 Prohibition and Extermination by The Government

It was after the fall of Myanmar's Myanmar military dictatorship in 2011 following the general elections that were held in 2010 that a massive effort to exterminate and destroy opium began. Based on the confession of one opium farmer in Myanmar after the establishment of the civil government, it appears that efforts to eradicate opium by the Myanmar government have destroyed the livelihoods that are carried out every day. Not a few farmers who entered into poverty to end his life. An economy that has a value of billions of dollars is not only an arms trading business, not only a petroleum business but the global drug business can also be worth billions of dollars and from a dirty business will produce dirty actors in it such as ethnic armed organizations, trade organizations then dirty people in government and this disgusting circulation will not last as long as the source continues to produce (Kaplan and Win 2020). During the civil administration of Myanmar, efforts were made to ensure that the production of opium in Myanmar, followed by the trade and use of existing illegal drugs, was reduced or even disappeared. There is assistance from international organizations such as Seefar which has implemented cooperation with one of the UN organs, namely UNODC in the form of developing recommendations in Myanmar regarding the development of policies to control drugs. There are 4 recommendations that have been developed, namely: reducing supply and developing alternatives; treatment and reduction of negative impacts; international cooperation; as well as research and analysis. The recommendations that have been made have been notified and followed up by a six-month consultation period held by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Myanmar, then the Myanmar police, then the Myanmar Drug Abuse Control which is referred to as CCDAC, and there is an international organization under the auspices of the United Nations which deals with everything related to drugs namely UNODC. Both government and non-government interests are involved in this and represent many sectors. (Seefar 2022).

One of the comprehensive steps taken by the government to eradicate opium is to conclude a national ceasefire agreement. The ceasefire agreement is marked as the first step in negotiations aimed at establishing a federal system for resolving ethnic grievances. The civil government that took power in 2011 after 49 years of military rule, did not grant the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) permission to participate on the grounds that their group was still fighting military rebel groups that existed on the border between Myanmar and China in the conflict that erupted in 2015 and that the existing military was given pretty heavy pressure. This agreement is a beacon in the reforms carried out by the civilian government after the fall of the military dictatorship in 2011. The TNLA itself has different goals from the existing government because for the TNLA their main enemy is opium and in this context it is drugs and then in second place is the government. Nevertheless, the efforts made by the TNLA appear to be very real and this has been proven that this group has arrested traffickers and has destroyed opium fields (Ferrie 2015).

4.4 The Control of “Tatmadaw” 2021

The sadistic coup that was carried out in 2021 by overthrowing the existing democratic government, the government's efforts to eradicate opium must return to point zero. Opium production in Myanmar has almost doubled with production in 2021 of around 423 metric tons and in 2022 reaching 795 metric tons after the Myanmar military took over the government after 1 year (Head and Ng 2023). It was not only an increase in opium production that occurred after the military returned to power, but civil war was born again between the military and anti-coup forces and approximately 1.2 million people fled to neighboring countries after the military took over (Doyle 2023). 33% is an increase in opium cultivation in Myanmar which was ordered directly by the military to reverse one hundred eighty degrees of damage that has been done by the civilian government over the last 6 years and resulted in a decrease in production. Jeremy Douglas who is UNODC regional representative said “Farmers who are in areas with high levels of conflict tend not to have much choice but to return to opium. This is due to the disruption of the economy, security and governance supported by the military coup in February 2021”. 40,100 hectares is an expansion of the opium planting area which will be carried out in 2022 while the production level has increased by 41% and is equivalent to 20 kg per hectare and this value is the highest value since UNODC recorded (Reuters 2023).

4.5 The Involvement of “Tatmadaw”

The title of Asia's biggest drug supplier is not the only title Myanmar has, but the gripping and vicious civil war and oppression it has also been subjected to. UNODC, an important organ of the UN that deals with drug control and crime prevention, has stated that drugs and conflict in Myanmar have a common thread. In order to resolve the conflict in Myanmar, the main source, drugs, needs to be eradicated. The dirty money generated by opium production has fuelled militarisation coupled with a corrosive political economy where opium farming areas in Myanmar's Shan region need better security to keep the wheels of the dirty economy moving.

Japanese newspapers International Crisis Group and Nikkei state that the purpose of the Myanmar army, known as the Tatmadaw, negotiating a ceasefire with rebel groups in the Shan region is to provide benefits to rebel groups, namely the freedom to produce and trade opium in controlled areas and to neighbouring countries through the border. Opium is the economic heart of the Shan region, especially since the region borders Laos and Thailand and is often dubbed the golden triangle (Stone, 2021). Recent data shows that Myanmar is the country that produces methamphetamine and methamphetamine is the most valuable commodity in Myanmar and the economic engine of the Shan region. Estimates in 2019 show that methamphetamine accounted for 61 billion USD of drug production and trafficking in the Shan region (Nyein 2020). The military junta uses methamphetamine to keep itself in power but most importantly to maintain its source of revenue and bargain with ethnic groups. The Government of National Unity or Civilian Government together with UNODC both separately and together are in a high position to lead the fight against opium production and trafficking in Myanmar.

In 1993, the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act was passed, which was used to target opium farmers, small-scale dealers, and drug users. However, it did not target those responsible for larger-scale drug production. The Tatmadaw has enormous power and influence over the central government's response to drugs as the Central Committee on Drug Abuse is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The National Drug Control Policy states that in 2016, around 48% of the 60,000-80,000 prisoners detained in Myanmar were convicted of drug-related offenses and the rate of drug-related offenders in Myanmar prisons reached 70-80%. When drug users are imprisoned for drug use, militias have access to the drug trade and profit from the drug industry that operates with impunity (Just Access 2021). 2008 was a year that changed everything including the power of the Tatmadaw. In this year, a constitution was drafted by the Tatmadaw and stated that all Burmese armed forces were under the command of the Ministry of Defence. The Tatmadaw attempted to turn EAOs (Ethnic Armed Organisations) into pro-government militias known as People's Militia Forces (PMF) and Border Guard Forces (BGF). These two militias are not funded by the military budget but they are allowed to control their territory and produce anything to benefit themselves including opium production while maintaining security with the Tatmadaw. Many non-authorized PMG and BGF militias are not under Tatmadaw command but are authorized to conduct their own profit-making activities in their areas including opium industry.

5. Conclusions

The coup that was carried out by the Myanmar military and turned the government into a military junta was to secure one of the vital profitable commodities in Myanmar, namely Opium. When the Civil government took over in 2011, the military's decades of work to preserve these commodities and enjoy these benefits had to stop for a while until the Myanmar military took over again in 2021. The accusations leveled against Aung San Suu Kyi were corruption, breaking the rules and the Covid-19 protocol is just a mere and baseless accusation which is nothing but to smooth over the existing military government. Based on the concept of power defined by Robert Dahl in this context the Myanmar military gets everything. They understood and knew that the only way to regain power was to overthrow the existing government and in this case they staged a coup. But behind the way they get the power they use, they also get a vital and valuable commodity, namely Opium, which can be worth hundreds of millions to billions of dollars. If they control 100% of Opium production in Myanmar and eradicate existing enemies, power will be obtained along with existing luxuries while the interests of the people can be set aside even with the available resources they can silence the people who threaten the government that currently leads.

Seeing from the situation that occurred, the author gives the first suggestion to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to be able to emphasize to countries bordering Myanmar such as Thailand and Laos to be more vigorous in fighting the Opium trade and providing resources so that Myanmar's Opium production is under pressure from the trade route sector. Second, the author suggests for UNODC to increase its role through strategic policies and appropriate ways so that opium production in Myanmar can decrease without offending political aspects. The impact of opium is felt by all countries in the world and the negative impact is the most felt in this case. With the fall of the civilian government and the establishment of the military government, the subject of negotiations is the military government, so UNODC needs to adjust its

negotiation strategies and steps. The military government has and has always considered Opium as an important aspect of the economy, so it is a challenge for UNODC.

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